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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000402

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DEPT FOR WHA FRONT OFFICE

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SUBJECT: CUBAN DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY SPELLS A-R-R-O-G-A-N-T

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Classified By: COM Michael Parmly; Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) The Cuban regime trotted Fidel Castro out for a meeting with visiting Chinese Politburo member Wu Guanzheng, following soon after Foreign Minister Perez Roque's visit to China. Perez Roque also visited India and used Cuba's presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to obtain a NAM statement critical of the release of Luis Posada Carriles from a U.S. court. The regime is still trying to build on Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos's visit, and received the Deputy Foreign Minister of Norway, who took a Moratinos-esque conciliatory approach to the GOC. The Iranian Foreign Minister is in Havana following right on the heels of the high-level Chinese delegation, which departed April 24 after getting its feet wet at Varadero Beach. As if to ask the USG if it wants to play the game on the regime's terms, the Cuban Interior Ministry offered to deport to the U.S. an AMCIT serving time in a long-languishing money-laundering case. We will proceed to accept the criminal, but do not want Cuba or any other country to think that there is any quid-pro-quo. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Cuba's Saturday April 21 state-run newspapers showed still photographs of Chinese Politburo representative Wu Guanzheng meeting with Fidel Castro, who dressed in an athletic warm-up suit, along with an official photo of a one-on-one of Wu and Raul Castro, the latter in a business suit. Miami evening TV talk shows aired footage from Chinese media of the same meeting, which had no sound, but subtitles in Chinese. Fidel Castro appeared much the same as he did when he was videotaped receiving Hugo Chavez in late January: Withered, the "deer-in-the-headlights" look in the eyes, able to carry on some conversation from a chair, then stand up for an embrace at the end. (Comment: No audio is an indication that Castro was probably incoherent; although his very presence in front of the camera is still a powerful message regardless of what he might have said. We are reasonably certain that the Chinese transacted their substantive business with Raul Castro; the imagery of the Fidel Castro segment tells the world that the hard line is as hard as ever and reform is not on the table. End Comment.)

13. (C) Cuba's active diplomacy took Foreign Minister Perez Roque to India, Vietnam and China, with two of those three visits reciprocated in Havana. India is already an investor in Cuba's offshore oil exploration, and has just signed on to an agreement of mutual support for foreign ministries. At each stop, Cuban media reported Perez Roque winning from his counterpart some kind of message of support for Cuba's position vis-a-vis the Posada Carriles case, as well as for release of the five Cubans (always referred to as "The Five Heroes of the Republic") imprisoned in the USA for espionage.

The Cuban Foreign Ministry also took advantage of its position as president of the NAM to issue a statement on behalf of the whole NAM that criticizes the USG for releasing Posada Carriles. Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki, in Havana on April 24, added his voice of anti-terrorism authority to the criticism of Posada's release.

14. (C) As Embassy Oslo reported (Reftel), Deputy Foreign Minister Raymond Johansen visited Havana in mid-April, the week after Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos was here. Johansen followed Moratinos' lead in taking a conciliatory approach to the Cuban regime and not seeing any dissidents while he was here. Norwegian Charge Tore Holvik protested to us on April 24 that Johansen had "insisted to the Cubans" that they "accept" the simultaneous visit of Norway's MFA head of human rights. This individual, Holvik said, was able to see both official Cubans and a number of dissidents.

15. (C) In U.S. - Cuba relations, the month of April has featured Luis Posada Carriles, a case that has generated the full blast of regime media output: Special TV magazine shows; newspaper reports and editorials signed by Fidel Castro; constant radio announcements; public service announcements between innings of the telecasts of the Cuban equivalent of the World Series; and messages of solidarity

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from every Cuban regime sympathizer in the world. And out of nowhere, the Interior Ministry called in USINT's Drug Interdiction Specialist, to offer up an arrested American Citizen for deportation to the U.S. to be prosecuted for money laundering. This is a case that had been kicking around for over a year, and for no reason related to the case itself, the Cubans put it on the table (Septel - NOTAL).

16. (C) Comment: Our sense is that the GOC's strategy to deal with its own uncertainty regarding Fidel and Raul Castro's leadership is to project a robust international image, always taking the offensive on every issue. Perez Roque communicated this arrogant attitude to CODEL Flake/Delahunt last December: "We're on a roll, with macroeconomic numbers all going up, and friends all over the world, and so on. If you want to deal with us on our terms, fine; otherwise, we don't need you." Dealing with Cuba on its terms means that we work more closely on drugs, alien smuggling and counter-terrorism, while Cuba otherwise waits for opponents of trade sanctions to tear them down from within the USA. Needless to say, we don't accept this view of the world. The reality, which so many who ply the Havana circuit can't easily see through, thanks to the distorted Cuban media prism, is that the U.S. economy is the one that is booming and that a third-world basket case like Cuba needs us much more than we need them. The Castro dictatorship has done nothing lately to earn any new attention or legitimacy; the fact that it wins some from Spain or Norway or others in the third world has to do with NAM and UN votes or probably just plain anti-Americanism. The latter might even explain some of the European behavior too.

PARMLY